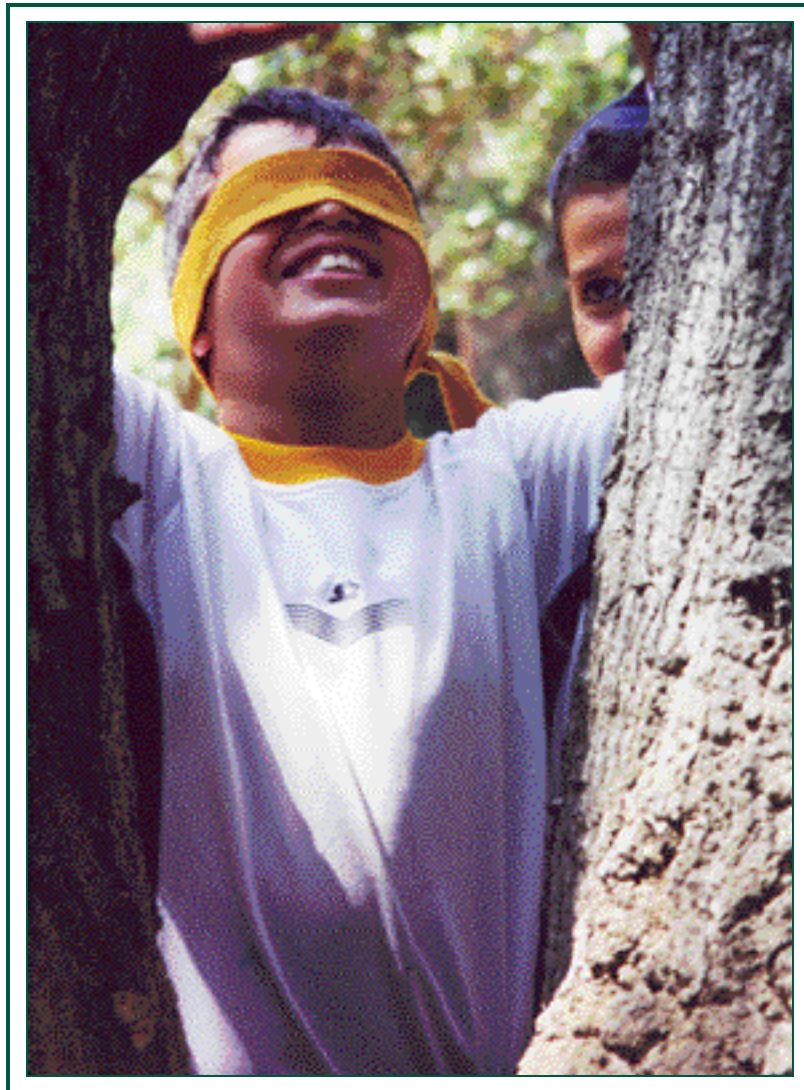


Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority



Earth Adventure Field Science Program

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15601 Sunset Boulevard
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) was created in 1985 with a mission to protect and preserve park and open space lands within the Santa Monica Mountains, the mountains surrounding the San Fernando, San Gabriel, La Crescenta, Simi and Conejo Valleys, the Whittier/Puente Hills, and the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The MRCA is a joint powers authority between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a California state agency, the Conejo Recreation and Park District and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.



Mission and Accomplishments

Working with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Conejo and Rancho Simi Recreation and Park Districts, the MRCA has improved public access and recreational opportunities in the mountains in its efforts to:

- **Protect parkland and build trails:** The MRCA has helped protect over 35,000 pristine acres of park and open space and has built over 100 miles of hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails.
- **Restore and develop parkland along the Los Angeles River:** The MRCA is working with public agencies, cities, community groups and non-profit organizations to help with the greening and restoration of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. Development of pocket parks, recreation areas, and bicycle trails are elements of this process.
- **Create public and private partnerships:** The MRCA works in partnership with the National Park Service and California State Parks, as well as with local governments, private foundations, citizen organizations and developers to ensure that planning policies protect natural resources and public access to the mountains.
- **Direct education programs targeted at under-served populations:** This growing nationally-acclaimed program—consisting of overnight camps, day camps, camping trips, after-school programs, leadership training, and job training programs—reaches over 35,000 children and young adults a year.

The MRCA and its Urban Mission

Los Angeles is one of the most park poor cities in the country. Whole generations of children are growing up today without any sort of connection to the natural world.

Our goal is to reintroduce the natural environment into the lives and urban fabric of the most densely populated areas of Los Angeles. In addition to building parks and natural spaces in the communities that most need them, we strive to bring urban youth to the beautiful protected areas that surround Los Angeles.



We accomplish this aim through naturalist programs specifically designed for children who have never visited a natural area, and transportation programs for groups and organizations that would not otherwise have access to our public parklands. Furthermore, we offer bilingual services in the form of park materials, interpretive programs, campfire programs, and docent programs. Specifically this past year, over 3,500 underserved youth participated in overnight programs, and over 20,000 people were transported to the Mountains who otherwise might not have been able to experience them.

One of our largest programs achieving this goal is the **Earth Adventure Field Science Program** located at **Temescal Gateway Park**.

What is the Earth Adventure Field Science Program?



Our aim is to bring the natural world to young students who have often times never had the opportunity to smell the scent of a wildflower, or watch a deer jump gracefully through a meadow. Many of the students that attend our camp have never seen stars away from the glare of city lights, nor have had the pleasure of roasting a marshmallow over a campfire. The Earth Adventure Field Science Program is dedicated to bringing a rich outdoor experience to Los Angeles' under-served, urban youth.

The Earth Adventure Field Science Program has been serving the inner-city communities of the Los Angeles Basin for the past 5 years. Our committed and professional naturalists run a 3-day/2-night field science program, which aligns with state science content standards. In order to attend our program, elementary, middle, and high school classes apply for a free grant through LAUSP, the Los Angeles Urban Systemic Program.

"I love the combination of team building and natural science. A great environment is provided for kids here."

Kate Kahler—4th grade teacher at First St. Elementary

"Thank you for teaching us a lot of things and letting us play games and see the stars. I hope that we can come again."

Guadalupe Rios—5th grader at Multnomah Elementary

"I can't say enough positive things about this program—out of this world!"

Missy Shepard—7th grade teacher at El Sereno Middle School

Located in the Beautiful Santa Monica Mountains

Temescal Gateway Park, the home of the Earth Adventure Field Science Program, is nestled in the Santa Monica Mountains in the community of Pacific Palisades. Temescal Gateway Park borders Topanga State Park and its 8,000 acres of protected land, offering an ideal jumping-off point for exploration.

"The activities we were doing were great. I had a lot of fun. I love hiking."

Pedro Hernandez—11th grader at Thomas Jefferson High School

"Very full program that relates very closely to the 6th grade science standards."

Jose Rojas—6th grade teacher at Patrick Henry Middle School



Meet the Staff

What makes the Earth Adventure Field Science Program excel is the quality of our staff. Take a look for yourself.



Taryn Frost Bayer – Program Coordinator

After being awarded her Bachelors degree in Aquatic Biology from the University of California at Santa Barbara, Taryn went on to gain a Masters degree in Forestry from Duke University. Before joining our team, Taryn worked for Duke University's Soils laboratory examining the effects of varying atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide on the growth rate of Loblolly pine trees. Taryn has worked at Earth Adventure Field Science Program for the past 3 years.

Jessica Geoghegan – Naturalist

Jessica recently completed her Masters degree in Environmental Education from Leslie University in conjunction with the Audubon Expedition Institute. Jessica also holds a Bachelors degree from St. Mary's College in Maryland in Environmental Studies. Jessica formerly served as Assistant Director of the Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Discover Camp in Maryland. Jessica is in her first year with the Earth Adventure Field Science Program.

Michael Young – Naturalist

Michael served as a volunteer at Temescal Gateway Park for the past 6 years. Michael was an assistant counselor in training for the past 2 years and has recently become a full-time naturalist. Michael's knowledge of the canyon and surrounding areas is un-paralleled.

"I learned so many things that I just want to learn more."

Mariah Fonseca—4th grader at First St. Elementary

"The exposure to how the natural world impacts their world was the most important aspect to me. To see, feel, touch, and smell things they normally do not see or do not take the time to see."

Miriam Perlitsh—chaperone and mother of a 6th grade student at Patrick Henry Middle School

"The naturalists were very knowledgeable in all subjects presented. They were sensitive and caring towards the students."

Ms. Acosta—5th grade teacher at Farmdale Elementary School

Brian O'Dowd – Naturalist

Brian recently returned from Togo, West Africa where he served as an Environmental Education and Protection Volunteer in the Peace Corps. Brian holds two Bachelors degrees from UC San Diego, one in Ecology and one in Latin American Studies. He speaks both Spanish and French fluently. Brian is in his first year with the Earth Adventure Field Science Program.

Daniel Bolton – Cook

Daniel is our chef extraordinaire with over 15 years experience in the culinary arts. Daniel finds his contentment in serving up healthy, nutritious meals to our visiting students.

Team Building and Sensory Awareness

Our team of naturalists begins by guiding each group of students through a series of team building and sensory awareness activities. By taking students out of the classroom and into nature, we open their minds to a different way of perceiving things. With the ebb and flow of the natural world as our guide, we challenge our students to work together as a team, stressing the value of cooperation and communication over competition.

Furthermore, in today's technological age of video games and cable television, most adolescents are not accustomed to using the full scope of their sensory abilities. The best way to open a young mind to the natural world is to awaken the five senses to the myriad living things surrounding them. The naturalists facilitate such an awakening through activities like "the Unnatural Trail," which challenges students to use their vision to locate "unnatural" things that have been placed along the trail, and "Hug a Tree," a game in which students are challenged to identify "their" tree using all of their senses except for vision.



Mammals and Tracks



Later in the day naturalists lead the students on an interactive journey exploring the different mammals of the canyon. Students learn through studying skulls, touching pelts, and examining tracks and rubber scat. Naturalists guide a discussion about what separates mammals from the rest of the animal kingdom, and how to deduce certain characteristics of animals by using clues found on their skulls, tracks, and in their scat.



The mammals session concludes with each of the students making their own animal track out of plaster. Each student leaves with a plaster track as a memory of his or her unique experience.

"The Naturalists were outstanding, very energetic, informative, patient, and enthusiastic."

Rosy Flores—8th grade teacher at LA Academy Middle School

"I enjoyed everything about the program!"

Rosie Ibarra—12th grader at Thomas Jefferson High School

"I learned a lot about nature and learning to work together. I had a ton of fun."

Sharen Cervantes—7th grader from El Sereno Middle School

Night Hike



On their first night, students take an exciting hike up to the viewpoint over-looking the Pacific Ocean and the entire Los Angeles basin. Amidst this dramatic backdrop, students engage in discussions on habitat fragmentation, ambient light pollution, and the cosmos. Students learn to identify planets and constellations, and discuss the effects that humans have on the lives of nocturnal animals.

"This was the best camp I have ever been to."

Jeff Elkrief-5th grader at Nestle Elementary School

Waterfall Hike/GLOBE Hydrology

The following morning students go on a 2-mile roundtrip hike to the Temescal Canyon Waterfall. Naturalists lead discussions on water conservation, geology, ecology, and hydrology. Students complete 3 water quality tests as part of the GLOBE program (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment). Their results, coupled with other student results from around the world, are used to aid scientists in the collection of critical scientific data.

Students learn how to identify local plants and are introduced to how the Chumash and Gabrielino Native Americans used these plants in their daily lives. Students see the effects of pressure in the formation of conglomerate rocks, and observe the evidence of ancient earthquakes that raised the Santa Monica Mountains from beneath the ocean. With the flowers and trees as our teachers, students learn about ecological concepts such as pollination, seed dispersal, and the water cycle.



Nature Games

In the afternoon, students play different "nature games" that reinforce themes learned earlier on the trail. In "Turtle Hurdles," a game created by the Council for Environmental Education, students learn the everyday pressures of life as an endangered sea turtle. Pretending to be sea turtles, students have to dodge both natural predators and man-made obstructions, such as fishing

"If only LA Unified School District could send each and every one of their kids here at some point in time."

*Donna Higashida-chaperone and mother of a 6th grade student at
Patrick Henry Middle School*



Nature Games (cont.)

nets and oil spills, in order to reach shore and lay eggs. In the game “Deadly Links,” developed by the Western Regional Environmental Education Council, students demonstrate the food chain with a twist. A harmful poison is introduced at the bottom of the chain affecting even the Red-tailed Hawks at the top. Students cover such topics as predator/prey relationships, human impact on the natural world, and bioaccumulation.

“I would want to stay here for a month if I could.”

Johanna—4th grader at Camino Nuevo Chapter Academy

“The Naturalists made the program absolutely outstanding! The impact on the students is priceless!”

Shane O’Doherty—5th grade teacher at Nestle Avenue Elementary School

Campfire

Below a star filled sky, students cap their stellar week around a campfire nestled into the back of the canyon where they perform songs, and skits, and tell stories. And, of course, what campfire would be complete without roasting marshmallows and making delicious s’mores? Students examine the impact of fire not only on the chaparral, but also on the people who live in the mountains.

“The Naturalists are engaging, entertaining and knowledgeable. They have an incredible rapport with both the kids, and the adults.”

Toni Agovino—7th grade teacher at Dana Middle School



Loop Hike



On their last morning, students are led on a 2.6-mile loop hike past the waterfall, up to the viewpoint, and back down to the canyon. Clear days offer a spectacular view stretching from Downtown Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Mountains all the way to Catalina and Santa Barbara Islands.

“I thought this place was heaven.”

Ullises Carcamo—5th grader at Alexandria Elementary School

“This is an excellent program and gives kids a chance to experience things that they might not normally get a chance to experience.”

Marc Ellis—4th and 5th grade teacher at Granada Elementary

“It was fun and we got to go see the stars. This trip was a blast.”

Rachel Liner—3rd grader at Granada Elementary

Compost and Food Waste Program

Throughout each groups' stay at Temescal Gateway Park, students are encouraged to reduce the amount of food that they waste. Each group is split into two teams that both strive to produce the least amount of food waste. Excess food from each meal is collected into separate compostable and non-compostable buckets and weighed. Students add all compostable food scraps to our compost piles and vermicomposting bin located in a native botanical garden adjacent to the dining hall. Students see first hand how we can transform our food waste into a rich fertilizer for plants.

"It was exciting, educational, and it was good to get away from the city."

Gabriela Marin—7th grader at El Sereno Middle School

"I have never had an experience like this."

Andrea Martinez—7th grader at Hollenbeck Middle School



"I want to come back!"

The MRCA believes in the challenging endeavor of building bridges between urban youth and the natural world. Both teachers and students agree that the Earth Adventure Field Science Program challenges participants to reflect and analyze while giving them an experience they will never forget. As Jonathan, a 4th grader at First Elementary in Downtown Los Angeles says, "I want to come back cause it was the best place in my life."

"I saw new things that I would have never seen had I not come here."

Oscar Flores—9th grader at Woodrow Wilson High

"It was fun hiking and learning about the stars. This seems to be the best science education. I wish that we stayed longer."

Minie Chailert—7th grader at Madison Middle School

Special Thanks

"It was fun and we were learning at the same time."

Karen Medina—5th grader at Alexandria Elementary School

"It was fun and we got to experience things that we never have."

Lauren—7th grader at Dana Middle School

We would like to thank LAUSP and LAUSD for prioritizing outdoor education for urban youth and for continually choosing the Earth Adventure Field Science Program as a venue for their outdoor education activities.

More Information

If you would like to receive more information about MRCA programs or would like to sponsor a class field trip, please contact Taryn Frost Bayer at (310) 454-1395 ext 152.